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How Dreams are Told: Secondary Revision—The Critic, the Editor, and the Plagiarist

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ABSTRACT

Secondary revision is a highly provocative concept arising out of Freud's attempts to explain the construction of dreams, but it remains relatively ill-defined. It includes three related, yet by no means identical aspects of the process by which the dream acquires its more or less final form during the experiencing, the remembering, and the telling. It represents one of the most interesting hypotheses dealing with the fluid world between sleeping and waking, a field which still presents us with a host of unanswered questions.

Secondary revision not only reflects the higher levels of the dreamer's mental functioning superimposed on his biological substructure, but it also operates as a sensitive indicator of the cultural factors which have helped mold his personality. These factors include both the subculture of the analytic situation and the impact of society in the larger sense. I make reference to individual dreamers in analysis and to the world of dreams recorded in the past from our own and other cultures.

The Conclusion

Now reader, I have told my dream to thee,
See if thou canst interpret it to me
Or to thyself or neighbor: but take heed
Of misinterpreting: for that instead
Of doing good, will but thyself abuse:
By misinterpreting evil ensues.
Take heed also that thou be not extreme,
In playing with the outside of my dream:

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Nor let my figure or similitude
Put thee into a laughter or a feud;
Leave this for boys and fools; but as for thee,
Do thou the substance of my matter see.
Put by the curtains, look within my veil;
Turn up my metaphors, and do not fail:
There if thou seekest them such things to find,
As will be helpful to an honest mind.
What of my dross thou findest there, be bold
To throw away, yet preserve the gold.
What if my gold be wrapped up in ore?
None throws away the apple for the core:
But if thou shalt cast all away as vain,
I know not but 'twill make me dream again.
The End

ALTHOUGH "THE CONCLUSION" EXPRESSES IDEAS ABOUT dreaming similar to Freud's, the language gives it away as

having been written much earlier, over 300 years ago in fact. It comes at the end of Part One of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, not strictly speaking a book on dream interpretation. It has nevertheless a curious bearing on our subject, the role of secondary revision in giving final form to the tales told by dreamers.

I shall discuss how the dream, experienced in a state of sleep, is then transformed into a tale that can be remembered, told to oneself and to another person. Inevitably, this will bring me to the borders of literature, and I shall take the opportunity to refer not only to the dreams of individuals known to me as patients and otherwise, but shall employ as well some classic examples of dreams recorded long ago. As analysts, however, we cannot rest content with listening to and enjoying these dream tales, or even critically studying the texts, as a literary critic might, but are obliged to seek out their underlying meanings, the unconscious elements which are both concealed and expressed in the manifest dream. We try to understand how

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the dream is transformed into a story, and what that process tells us not only about the nature of the dreamer's deepest conflicts, but more particularly, his resources for dealing with them which include, as I shall point out, his cultural origins.

We may begin with some questions about how we observe dreams in practice. When a patient reports a dream, how do we know what he has really dreamed? To what extent has the dream been modified, condensed, or elaborated during the lapse of time between waking and the recalling and telling of it? If we were to insist that the dream be treated as if it were a precisely demarcated process of thought and affect, occurring during a finite period of sleep, we would be operating with false premises and setting ourselves a task for which we have never had adequate methods and for which answers may not be available. We can measure the length of dreaming *periods* in an individual sleeper by following evidences of electrical activity in the cortex, but this tells us only that the subject was probably dreaming at certain times. If we waken him, he may be able to relate his dream, true; but can we be sure that the very process of awakening did not introduce changes in the text, which will now appear in his report of what he dreamed? (**Mack, in Panel, 1984**)

Most of the dreams told to us are "dreamlike," full of contradictions and inconsistencies, mixed up in time and space, making little sense at first. A patient related a dream he described as "weird": "There were two men, handsome, well-built, but without arms or legs, as if they had been amputated. They looked identical, like twins. They seemed to be suspended in air, and fighting with each other, but playfully, as if embracing." The dreamer made no attempt to explain how they could do so without limbs. Given its "raw" quality, this account could never be mistaken for a realistic narrative. With the aid of the dreamer's associations, it was relatively easy to relate the dream to masturbatory conflicts and fantasies of castration, confirmed by the dreamer's subsequent remarks. Perhaps most dreams are "weird" in this sense, demonstrating clearly Freud's three

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original aspects of the dream work, condensation, displacement, and the choice of means of representation.

Even under ordinary conditions, however, certain dreams of both adults and children appear to have a logical structure, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and to convey rather commonplace ideas. If we accept the surface message, we may find little evidence of unconscious conflict or grossly unacceptable wishes. These well-organized dreams may portray "cure," or perhaps sudden good fortune, like winning a lottery, or sexual success (as in the case of the dream of Samuel Pepys, below). On the face of it these dreams make sense and tell coherent stories; at times it is difficult to be sure whether we are listening to an account of a dream or to that of an actual event. It is tempting to take such stories at face value and be satisfied with the dreamer's interpretation as sufficiently meaningful. Being faced with no new and unpleasant material, he is likely to be pleased by such an approach. Often these interpretations are banal or abstract and metaphorical, conveying some sort of moral lesson or philosophical message.¹

What has happened in these instances to the unconscious contributions to the dream of "the terrible, savage, and lawless form of desires," ascribed to the dreamer by Plato, and Freud after him? And why dream at all, while one can daydream pleasurable ideas and consciously reject painful ones? It is difficult to accept that dreaming, which occupies so much of our interest and energies, deals with banal anecdotes and inferior movie scripts. Freud did not believe it, and we are inclined to follow him in choosing to extend our inquiries beyond the readily available message of the unplumbed manifest dream.

It was in order to deal with the many questions raised by the apparent rationality and logical organization of certain manifest dreams that Freud evolved the concept of secondary revision. His account was not an exhaustive one, nor did it

¹ The latter, "anagogic" interpretation (a term introduced by Silberer), Freud regarded as altogether superfluous, and likely to divert attention from the more significant psychoanalytic interpretation (**Freud, 1900**, p. 524).

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constitute the clearest section of his work, for it contained many ambiguities and undefined areas. This is in accord with the nature of the subject itself, for while we may pretend that we can be clear about the line of demarcation between sleeping and waking phenomena, these are in fact not always so easily distinguished, even by the well-balanced among us. It is generally impossible to say exactly where the dream work proper ends and secondary revision begins (Stein, 1965).

Freud's discussion may remind us therefore of an exciting but unfinished sketch by a great artist, containing thinly painted and overpainted areas which reveal tentative and half-concealed figures. Such sketches make special demands on the viewer, stimulating questions and speculations; these unfinished works are often more fascinating and productive of new ideas than those which have been completed. I have no intention of trying to complete Freud's sketch in order to ascertain where the limits of the process are to be located; they are too fluid for that. Rather, let us see where a study of the sketch itself leads us.

Aside from a brief allusion in a letter to Fliess (dated July 7, 1897); (Freud, 1887-1902, pp. 211-213), secondary revision was first anticipated in the statement: "It is hardly rash to assume that the unintelligibility of the dream's content ... has led to its being recast in a form designed to make sense of the situation ... this misunderstanding must be regarded as one of the factors in determining the final form assumed by dreams" (Freud, 1900, p. 243). The solution is foreshadowed in the passage: "Even the judgements made *after waking* upon a dream that has been remembered, and the feelings called up in us by the reproduction of such a dream, form part, to a great extent, of the latent content of the dream and are to be included in its interpretation" (1900, p. 445). But Freud did not tackle the problem in earnest until he reached the section on secondary revision. He first included it as part of the dream work, but later recognized that it could not be so narrowly confined (1923, p. 241). The dream, faced with the demand to be put into words and told, if only to oneself, is modified to make it more acceptable

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to the common sense and moral sensibilities of the dreamer and perhaps to others to whom it may be told. This may take place during sleep, upon the moment of awakening, or at some later time. Secondary revision, therefore, unlike the dream work proper, is not confined to the sleeping state, but merges into waking and is the major contribution of waking thought to the final version of the dream. The questions raised by this phenomenon were eventually to make clear the need for a more inclusive model of the mind which could encompass the idea of functions which were not defined by their qualities of being conscious or unconscious, a task which was not to be accomplished until *The Ego and the Id* was published in 1923.

Secondary revision has in any case never been easy to define, and the term itself is not altogether adequate to describe its various aspects. Freud's name for the process was *sekundäre Bearbeitung*, first translated, as "secondary elaboration" (1900, p. 488, fn. 1), later to be replaced by the current and somewhat more accurate "secondary revision." Freud described, without sharply distinguishing, three related but somewhat different aspects of the process. Keeping in mind that they are hypothetical functions and by no means sharply separated, I have chosen for the sake of this discussion to give them anthropomorphic titles: "the Critic," "the Editor," and "the Plagiarist."

The Critic

The first type of revision occurs when "the dreamer is surprised, annoyed or repelled in the dream, and, moreover, by a piece of the dream-content itself" (Freud, 1900, p. 488). Citing the statement, "This is only a dream," Freud pointed out that this occurs most often as a prelude to waking, and that it constitutes a criticism of the dream, made generally because the censorship has been taken unawares by some disturbing image or affect. There are other remarks that may be included under this heading, e.g., "I had a weird dream" (as in the case cited earlier), "This dream is unimportant," or "I had a dream; it was ridiculous;

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"I only had it to get your attention," or, in a different vein, "I have a dream for you; you'll love this one!" These remarks may occur during sleep, upon waking, or when the dream is communicated to the listener. They tell a good deal about the significance of the dream and are frequently laden with valuable clues to the state of the transference.

The first example, "This is only a dream," may indeed be an attempt to reject or devalue the experience. In this case waking may have brought a sense of relief. Typical is the "examination dream," which many of us have experienced at some time or other. For example, a lecturer who was soon to deliver an important address dreamed he had arrived in another city for that purpose, and on the way to his hotel discovered he had left his lecture notes behind. He tried to telephone his wife at home; perhaps she could get his notes to him on time. But somehow he could not get a call through. Would he have to speak from memory, which now became vague even as to the subject of his address? He awoke, still anxious, and then said to himself, "Thank God it was only a dream!" As he sighed with relief, he decided to make some further changes in his half-finished manuscript, and was thus able to put aside whatever deeply buried conflicts had contributed to his dream.

The expressions, "This is only a dream" or, "This is a weird dream" imply another function as well, which Freud failed to mention in this context, although it is implicit throughout his writings on the sense of reality. The statement reassures the dreamer that he is returning to the wide-awake state, the "real" world, and more important, that he is still alive and in possession of his senses, not

crazy. These announcements act as vehicles for the resistance, which denies the significance of the dream and thus prevents recognition of the underlying conflicts which have stimulated it. At the same time they signify the triumph of the sense of reality, the return to sanity. (This double accomplishment constitutes a striking example of Waelder's [1930] principle of multiple function.)

The statement, "This is of no importance," may be understood

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to imply the opposite of what it says. It is a challenge to the analyst to unravel the secret, a challenge which it is usually worthwhile to accept.

The dream that was presented as "ridiculous, only to get your attention," was about death: the text of the dream and the associations to it revealed the dreamer's own overwhelming fears of his desire to join those loved ones who had died; he did indeed want my attention to protect him from the fatality to which he felt so powerfully drawn.

"You'll love this one!" is a frank admission that the dream is a gift to the analyst, who is expected to be gracious enough to receive it as such. If he is obstinate enough to insist on analyzing it, he must be prepared to deal with hurt feelings in response. Again the resistance is served, this time with charm. Picking up this challenge may teach one a good deal about the state of the transference, especially its seductive elements, the so-called "unobjectionable part of the transference," which I have discussed elsewhere (1981).

These critical remarks about the dream are the most obvious manifestations of secondary revision. We are familiar with them, and usually find ourselves ready to take them into account. The resistance is at least openly displayed; we know what we are up against. Other aspects of secondary revision are much less easily detected; which brings me now to the Editor, a far more subtle fellow who, if he is skillful, reveals few obvious traces of his efforts in the final version of the text.

The Editor

The second function included under the heading of secondary revision is the "editing" of the manifest dream, the attempt to clean it up and at the same time render it more logical, reasonable, and acceptable to common sense. Isakower (1954) suggested using the term, "redaction," meaning "reduction to literary form" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971). It was a more precise rendition of the editing activity of secondary revision,

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but it never caught on. I shall use it to refer to this "editorial" function, to distinguish it from the critical and plagiarizing aspects. It is closely associated with the process of transforming the visual imagery of the dream into words, so that it may be mastered, put into context, and committed to memory. Only then does it become possible to tell the dream to oneself and others.

The most obvious function of secondary redaction, however, is to repair or at least conceal the ravages of forgetting. We know that most dreams are forgotten very quickly, in whole or in part. In the latter case, the dreamer is impelled to fill in the gaps with whatever material he has at hand. He may be regarded, somewhat unfairly, as confabulating, like the alcoholic patient suffering from Korsakoff's syndrome, who makes up elaborate stories to conceal that his memory for events has been largely lost. In these patients, forgetting is chiefly determined by organic deficits; in the dreamer, it is brought about dynamically, by repression for the most part. (While some of the forgetting may be in the service of "clearing the mind" of unimportant "baggage," as emphasized by some experimental investigators, the dynamic role is far more interesting for our purposes.) We are familiar with the observation that it is far more difficult to remember a fragmentary text than a complete one. If, for example, we try to memorize a poem with a few lines omitted here and there, we simply fill them in, with made-up material if necessary. We do the same with the half-forgotten dream. The story is at least more coherent and more easily committed to memory than before, even if it still does not make much sense. The synthetic function of the ego requires that there be a continuous story line; the dreamer supplies one.

Secondary redaction may be undertaken for other reasons, for example, telling a good story or conveying a message; it may serve a moral or didactic purpose, or one of entertainment and distraction. Editing may be employed, therefore, not only to remember better and to arouse interest in the listener, but also to create a "cover story," to discourage deeper exploration

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of painful issues. "Disinformation" was not invented by governments, although it seems to have become a special prerogative of dreamers in high places.

If we accept the ubiquity of secondary redaction, recognizing that it plays a significant role in determining the final form in which most dreams are cast, it may be possible to understand more clearly the relation between manifest and latent dream. It is secondary redaction that allows the manifest dream (Freud's metaphorical rebus) to appear as if it made literal sense and its logic were genuine. It is meant to be deceptive, and yet furnish clues, like the cipher that conceals a secret message under an apparently sensible but

purposefully misleading text. As analysts, we need not regard ourselves as unduly suspicious if we are reluctant to take literally the obvious messages conveyed by manifest dreams. Through secondary redaction, the dreamer has further concealed the disturbing nature of the dream by adding a mass of detail, much of it irrelevant to the central conflict. It was this aspect of secondary revision which gave rise to the term "secondary elaboration," now lapsed into disuse (although Silber [1973] has argued for its retention).

The following is an example of an extensively edited dream:

I was driving from Cape Cod to New York in my MG. A Mercedes convertible passed me going the other way. It was driven by a very elegantly dressed young woman. I stopped at a restaurant where my brother and his family were having lunch. They'd been driving along in their station wagon. I told them about the young woman in the Mercedes ... Route One is not the fastest road, but it is the prettiest, and is a feasible alternative to the Turnpike. If I were unmarried and had no children, I could still be driving my MG, instead of the big station wagon I now own. Marriage may be a burden, but nevertheless I prefer it to being a bachelor.

The dream was actually much longer in the telling, taking

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up most of the session with an exhaustively detailed account of scenery and events along the road, rather like a travel guide in literary form. The conflict between marriage and bachelorhood had been clear enough; there was no secret about that. We were never successful in analyzing the dream more deeply, but we may assume that the latent dream thoughts included much more material of a less acceptable variety; there had been plenty of evidence elsewhere in the analytic work to confirm such a hypothesis.

This typical example of a long, highly organized, and elaborated dream was employed to disguise what was really troubling the dreamer, while it revealed very little that was new. Did this organizing process take place during the dream itself? Was it part of the dream? Does the dream end when the dreamer awakens, or does some kind of dream thinking persist after the sleeper has gotten out of bed and brushed his teeth? The latter is likely enough, for we have seen what changes can occur when a dream is retold later in the analytic session, or on the following day (Silber, 1973). This patient was not aware of having organized his dream as if he were writing a story, yet it was clear that he had done so. Since he was a gifted raconteur, it was not surprising that such organization came readily to him, whether working at his typewriter or reporting dreams (Stein, 1984). He did convey a message in the manifest dream, but the latter told us nothing we had not known before, including his predilection for telling a well-organized story rather than associating, which was how he dealt with the vast majority of the dreams he related. In contrast to the patient who reported the dream of the two torsos, this dreamer employed secondary redaction to a far greater extent, reflecting the complexity of his character and cultural level and the effectiveness of his defenses which had available the organizing capacities already built into his ego structure. It was evident that he had a very skillful dream Editor.

Fortunately for analytic work, redaction is not usually so complete, so that while dreams may appear to make a certain

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amount of sense in their manifest appearance, enough inconsistencies are detectable to allow an opening for analysis to uncover latent dream thoughts and even those unconscious wishes which instigated the dream in the first place. But when secondary redaction has been thorough, as in this latter example, analysis is limited; the resistance has taken over.

Analyzing dreams is therefore rather like studying a novel in depth. If we read primarily for pleasure, we like to have the work perfectly edited and beautifully polished; if, on the other hand, we wish to learn more about the author and his intentions, we prefer the manuscripts, the corrections, the letters and notes, especially those the writer and his family were least eager to make accessible. So it is with the dream; we try to undo the editing, if we can, to discover not only the content of the dream, but its origins and the processes by which the dreamer created the finished text. In this way we may become acquainted with his underlying wishes and conflicts and acquire as well an understanding of his habitual ways of dealing with these conflicts during different states of consciousness.

It would not be proper to leave the Editor without a remark about the role of the Listener, who by furnishing clues to his reactions, whether obvious or subtle, exerts an effect on the dreamer, thus influencing not only the frequency of reporting dreams, but the way they are finally told. This influence is not confined merely to the appearance of the transference in the content of the patient's dreams and associations; we are all very much aware of that phenomenon. Dreamers in analysis also edit their dreams to appeal to us, to play on our perceived areas of interest, to tease and frustrate by exposing our ignorance of fields in which they are expert, or to embarrass and shock us. We ourselves, by the way we listen and interpret, become accessories in secondary redaction.

Under the heading of secondary redaction I have chosen to include another familiar phenomenon, the dream within a dream. Here the sleeper dreams a dream and dreams about his dream. "The intention is ... to detract from the importance

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of what is 'dreamt' in the dream, to rob it of its reality" (Freud, 1900, p. 338). The analogy that comes to mind most readily is the "play within a play," as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Prince employed this device to change Claudius with murder, rather than facing him directly with the accusation, which would have been far too dangerous. It is as if he had instead imposed a bad dream upon his enemy, the reaction to which, the King starting up as if waking from a nightmare, Hamlet interpreted correctly as evidence of guilt.

Thus the dream within a dream permits the disturbing thought to reach consciousness, yet allows the dreamer to avoid its direct impact. Something of the same sort may also be accomplished by placing the action of the dream upon a stage or in film, the dreamer playing the role of observer, thus separating himself from the protagonist. This device leads us now to the third aspect of secondary revision which I have chosen to call "the Plagiarist."

The Plagiarist

Freud also included under the heading of secondary revision the employment of preformed day dreams or "phantasies" as readymade material for the construction of the dream. This factor "seeks to mould the material offered to it into something like a day-dream" (Freud, 1900, p. 492). Dreams may thus reproduce a previously constructed fantasy, either unconscious or conscious. If such a fantasy does become part of a dream, that section gives the impression of being far more coherent than the rest, and if it occupies a large part of the manifest dream, the latter may well appear in highly organized form, as in the dream of the trip from Cape Cod. In this case, it is often difficult to tell whether the dreamer is reporting what he experienced during sleep or while he was awake.

Child analysts are frequently faced with this question. Young children often tell stories in which night dreams, daytime fantasies, and conscious lying are virtually indistinguishable. The

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analyst must listen very carefully, and in order to get matters straight, may have to ask a good many questions. Somewhat older children report dreams which were indeed experienced during sleep, and yet incorporate typical daydreams almost unchanged. For example, a twelve-year-old girl dreamed that she played a heroic role in protecting a group of people from wild animals. The wish to be recognized and honored was unmistakably gratified, while conflict was kept out of awareness. Since the dreamer was a perfectly behaved child and a prototypical "good patient," the dream was altogether in character, manifesting a highly effective defensive structure. The analyst may speculate about the deeper meaning of the dream, presumably reflecting reaction formation, a way of dealing with the dreamer's intense anger toward her analyst and family members. Children may also report that they can "control" their dreams, remembering the good ones and forgetting the bad, a feat which, if successful, we may well envy.

Secondary revision may also account for the popular impression that creative acts are conceived during a state of sleep and dreaming. There is no doubt that daydreams may exhibit the kind of creative form and content which can lead to the production of a work of art. Whether this can take place during sleep is less certain. Freud argued against such a possibility, maintaining that true intellectual and creative work must have occurred preconsciously, while the person was awake, by a process akin to intuition. The products incorporated into the dream were then presented, falsely, as new creations of the dream itself. The question is still open. Perhaps we may leave it by reminding ourselves that the lines between dreaming and waking thought cannot be sharply drawn. Creativity may operate anywhere along the continuum between full alertness and dreaming, perhaps closer to the latter, probably not during deep sleep, but rather during those intermediate states which are also most conducive to secondary revision, not quite asleep, but not altogether alert either.

Daydreams represent wish fulfillments, carry infantile

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memory traces, and are less strictly controlled than ordinary waking thought, but more so than the prototypical night dream. The preformed fantasies employed in dreams are frequently derived from outside sources and thus reflect the cultural milieu of the dreamer (e.g. Artemidorus). Freud's patients borrowed from the drama and poetry currently popular in Vienna, while ours are more likely to incorporate material derived from films and television, so that it is not unusual to hear a patient describe a dream as if it were a film: "And then the scene changed to so and so..." Such images, by giving an apparently coherent and dramatic form to a dream, may serve to convey, and yet effectively protect the dreamer from his unacceptable wishes and painful conflicts—and thus further complicate the analyst's task.

A fine example of all three aspects of secondary revision, including a dream within a dream, may be found in *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (15 August, 1665). He accompanied his report of the dream with an account of his activities, thoughts, and emotions of the preceding day, and described in detail when and how he recalled the dream. While we lack free associations, we do have enough material available to allow us to make some plausible inferences about this experience of a man who was intelligent, curious, honest with himself, a superb reporter, and yet not notably introspective.

Pepys experienced the dream at the height of the Great Plague in London, during which he had good reason to fear for his life. On 14 August, he ended his entry for the day: "Great fears we have that the plague will be a great Bill this week" (i.e., many deaths

would have been reported). The entry for the next day begins:

Up by 4 a-clock and walked to Greenwich, where called at Captain Cockes and to his chamber, he being in bed—where something put my last night's dream into my head, which I think was the best that ever was dreamed—which was, that I had my Lady Castlemayne in my arms and was admitted

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to use all the dalliance I desired with her, and then dreamed that this could not be awake but that it was only a dream. But that since it was a dream and that I took so much pleasure in it, what a happy thing it would be, if when we are in our graves (As Shakespeare resembles it), we could dream, and dream such dreams as this—that then we should not be so fearful of death as we are in this plague-time" [Vol. 6, p. 191].

Pepys had reason enough to try to reassure himself while people were dying all about him. In the "outer" dream, he says in effect that it was after all only a dream, but at the same time consoles himself with the thought that death might consist of such glorious dreams. The identity of the woman in the manifest dream allows us to infer the nature of the underlying wish fulfillment. Pepys frequently indulged in sexually exciting fantasies about Lady Castlemayne, currently the mistress of King Charles II, his employer. He now incorporated one of these fantasies into his dream. The reminder that it was "only a dream," i.e., not real, was reassuring in at least two respects: first, he need not fear punishment by the King (Charles II was not known to be especially jealous, but still!); second, he could comfort himself with the recognition that he was awake, therefore alive. It was in essence a dream of oedipal conquest over the King—father, the penalty for which would be castration or death. Pepys, a lover of life, awakens and accepts that it was merely a pleasurable dream (see Stein, 1977).

Here the revision (which included an attempt at rational interpretation) seems to have taken place during both sleep and waking. Death need not be feared; it may even be anticipated, since it can consist of an erotically satisfying dream which will go on for eternity as the dreamer embraces the desirable mistress-mother. The reference to Hamlet's soliloquy reflects the dreamer's intense devotion to the theater and to the play, which he had seen at least three times. (It is tempting, if idle, to speculate to what extent Pepys sensed the passionate and conflicted

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nature of the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, and whether Betterton, the Olivier of his day, would have brought this out, even implicitly. Unfortunately, Pepys doesn't say.)

This dream, accompanied by the dreamer's account of his experiences and thoughts, illustrates all three phases of secondary revision. There is a critical comment, "... the best that ever was dreamed." We find explicit evidence of a dream within a dream. And the dreamer, acting as Critic, Editor, and Plagiarist, supplies us with a logically organized interpretation incorporating a conscious fantasy, pleasurable, and hardly innocent. His fantasies were frequently accompanied by masturbation, often picturing women favored by King Charles. He was especially preoccupied with Lady Castlemayne's beauty, having "glutted" himself with looking at her although, as he wrote, "I know well enough that she is a whore" (Vol. 3, p. 139). A gifted and candid writer, he turned the dream into a good story.

The use of a preformed fantasy for secondary revision was demonstrated by one of Freud's own dreams. In the dream of "dissecting my own pelvis," much of the imagery of the latter part was derived from the novel *She*, by H. Rider Haggard. Having recognized the connection, Freud was able to interpret the dream on a level which demonstrated to what degree he regarded himself as having embarked upon a journey into unknown and extremely dangerous territory, that of human sexuality. To have conquered this territory would be equivalent to an oedipal triumph; like Oedipus, he would pay the penalty, yet become immortal (1900, p. 452). Since dreams are employed in some degree for the gratification of old desires, long ago transformed or disavowed, it is most convenient to have at hand a suitable structure, already manufactured and ready for use, as Freud had available his memory of Haggard's novel.

Discussing the devices employed to conceal the nature and significance of one's ideas in dreams, Freud wrote, "A similar difficulty confronts the political writer who has disagreeable truths to tell to those in authority. If he presents them undisguised,

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the authorities will suppress his words ... he must conceal his objectionable pronouncement beneath some apparently innocent disguise ...," for example, by a story set in ancient times or in a far country (1900, p. 142).

This was rarely better exemplified than by Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, from which I derived the verse I presented at the beginning of this paper. He composed it in about 1678, while confined to jail for political and religious views considered subversive, not without reason, by the Restoration government of Charles II. Bunyan employed the very devices Freud was later to describe,

casting his message, "under the Similitude of a Dream." An exciting allegorical tale marked, or marred, depending on your point of view, by a severe Puritan morality, it became one of the most popular books ever published.

To return to the dream itself, the extreme variation in the length and complexity of individual dreams may be accounted for in great part by secondary revision, reflecting among other factors the contributions of the dreamer's culture. The contrast is most marked when we study dream tales familiar to non-Western peoples. In a study of Indian myths in relation to dreams and illusions, O'Flaherty (1984) has pointed out the extent to which dreams reported in classical Sanskrit texts employed familiar myths in the construction of their manifest content. These dreams were complex and elaborate to a degree which may strike the Western observer as strange and even improbable, being full of dreams within dreams within dreams, stories within stories, within stories. It is not clear where the "true" reality is, a question which is treated differently in classical Sanskrit tradition, as opposed to our own. Perhaps for them the dream could be the reality and reality the dream.

We, on the other hand, generally take for granted sharp distinctions between the world of the dream and that of "reality." Our Western myths are not only simpler, but are treated very differently. Influenced as we are by the rationalizing scepticism of classical Greek culture, we are inclined to regard our familiar myths as poetic creations which may have

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been derived at some remove from historical events, but are hardly to be accepted as historical in themselves (Griffin, 1986). There are parallels in the treatment of dreams: in the West, we are for the most part not inclined to regard our dreams as "real," to the extent that we apply such a standard to waking life.

We may suspect however, that the *underlying dream thoughts*, especially those derived from the experiences of childhood, will reveal more points of fundamental similarity between the Indian poets and ourselves. An Indian hero who in his dream had seen a god and his wife in the act of coitus, and was punished for his voyeurism, went on to elaborate a dream within a dream which consisted of going through many different lives over a vast period of time, thousands of years perhaps. A Western dreamer would be more likely to experience, or at least to tell, a much simpler dream set in finite time, just as his myths would be much shorter in the telling and linear in organization. Perhaps the Greeks had less time for story-telling, and demanded more directness and less involved plots, dramas to be completed in a reasonable time and place, and not *too* complicated, conforming more or less to the mode which would become explicit in the "Unities" of Aristotle.

O'Flaherty demonstrates that dreams reported in classical Sanskrit literature were heavily influenced by the familiar myths of that culture, and furthermore that there is reason to suppose that these myths may have been in turn based on the dreams of individuals. This is difficult to prove, but it gains plausibility from our discouraging experience in trying to concoct credible dreams out of whole cloth. Freud for one found it difficult if not impossible. Perhaps some poets believed that their fictional dreams were totally new creations, evolved while they were wide awake. But can we take their word for it? Perhaps these constructions were based on night dreams which had been repressed and returned to consciousness as if *de novo*. Did Homer compose Penelope's dream himself while awake or asleep? I am afraid we are left with a chicken-and-egg problem, but are in

² Arlow (1961) pointed out that personal dreams and daydreams, in contrast to shared daydreams and myths, "are made to be forgotten" (p. 379). This is generally, but not universally true. Even in clinical practice we come across dreams that nevertheless persist for years or decades in the memory of the dreamer (e.g., the dream of the Wolf Man). There are certain personal dreams which are 'typical', or more correctly 'common', e.g., the dream of sexual relations with one's mother, which appears in clinical practice and in myth as well (Stein, 1984).

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any case faced with no compelling reason to rule out the existence of a two-way street between group myth and individual dream, each capable of contributing to the other.²

Sophocles (c. 400 B.C.) indicated as much. In Oedipus the King, Jocasta tries to reassure Oedipus: Oedipus:

But surely I must fear my mother's bed?

Jocasta:

... As to your mother's marriage bed—don't fear it.

Before this in dreams as well as oracles, many a man has lain with his own mother.

But he to whom such things are nothing bears his life most easily [p. 52].

An Indian wife of the classical period would probably have offered a much less matter-of-fact statement than did the unfortunate Jocasta, by telling some elaborate stories of her own, which Oedipus, not noted for his patience, would hardly have been in a mood to listen to.

Secondary revision, then, unlike the other aspects of dream work, reflects vividly the culture of the dreamer, both as an individual and as a member of his society. It has been said that our patients have "Freudian" dreams, while those of Jungian analysts

have "Jungian" dreams, and so on. To the extent that this is true at all, it is so only in a limited sense. The differences, I suggest, may be accounted for not by a different constellation of conflicts, but rather by the operation of secondary revision. The dreamer's treatment has become a part of his culture which thereby influences the final version of his dreams. Secondary

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revision supplies not only the language (in the larger sense) in which the dream is told, but much of its structure and imagery as well. It employs the orally transmitted myths, the written literature, the dramatic performances, and so much else that constitutes a cultural heritage, including accepted attitudes toward dreams, their presumed connection with reality, and the customary ways of telling them to others.

Whether the *underlying* dream wishes, the unconscious conflicts and the latent dream thoughts, are so different in other cultures is another matter. Even the highly elaborated dream-myths of ancient Indian storytellers deal with the same basic issues we share with the classical Greeks—birth and death, the afterlife, food and elimination, omnipotence and weakness, parricide, incest, sibling rivalry, the primal scene, sexual success, castration, and changes of gender. The unfamiliarity we experience in reading the dreams of classical Sanskrit poets is determined not by their content, but rather by their highly elaborated form. I suggest that the obvious differences that strike us so forcibly depend on the degree to which secondary revision is used, itself influenced by the circumstances under which the dream is experienced, the expectations of the dreamer, and the identity of the recipient of the dream story, who may be spouse, analyst, or in the old days, an army that needed encouragement in the face of battle (Stein, 1984). The underlying themes are alike. Were it not for the contribution of secondary revision, all our dreams might be appallingly uniform, reflecting only our shared biological heritage, without conveying the rich diversity of individual experience and cultural influence. The unadorned dream might consist merely of eating, incest, parricide, and death, which could be very monotonous indeed. Our dreams are far more complex and interesting, uniquely human, thanks to secondary revision, that manifestation of the receptivity and power of the ego and superego, which among other things encompass the reservoir of cultural experience.

This is a matter of some importance clinically, for in order

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to analyze a patient's dreams, or for that matter to analyze at all, we should be reasonably familiar not only with his language and his individual history, but with his culture as well. Attempting to analyze without being acquainted with the imagery and rituals that play such a large part in the person's cultural heritage is likely to be a futile effort, limited to simplistic interpretations of little therapeutic or intellectual value. We are not required to see every film or read every book the patient has incorporated into his dreams, but we should be open to learning and understanding the special cultural experience that has enriched his dreams as well as his waking personality. While this caveat applies to analytic work in general, it is a particular issue in the interpretation of dreams, for in the secondary revision of the dream the patient evokes his cultural experience in a way which may make the language of the dream even more baffling to the observer who does not share that experience and who has failed to exert himself to become familiar with it.

Finally, the detection, analysis, and understanding of secondary revision is much more than an aid to the interpretation of dreams. Occupying a range of states of consciousness from REM sleep to waking, it has much in common with imagination and creativity, which are also likely to be most active during states of topographic regression. It is in its own way an example of "regression in the service of the ego," a happy phrase for which we owe thanks to the late Ernst Kris (1943, p. 448). I consider the phrase "happy" because it allows for the simultaneous use of two different models of the mind, the topographic and the structural, thus taking into account the complexity of the phenomena that concern us. Freud's original attempt to describe secondary revision purely in terms of topography, i.e., by use of the systems, *Ucs.*, *Pcs.*, *Pcpt-Cs.*, was much less successful than his efforts on behalf of the dream work proper.

We require a more inclusive model to account for the peculiarities of the process by which we introduce some degree of logic and plausibility into our dreams and our ability to incorporate not only "indifferent" impressions (the day's residues),

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but whole culture-bound structures. The structural model of the mind, based on the concepts, ego, superego and id, has been essential for the description of these characteristics of secondary revision, as well as so many other complex phenomena. This has resulted in the marshalling of powerful arguments (e.g., Arlow and Brenner, 1964) for putting aside, or at least rendering subordinate, the topographic model, in which states of consciousness are central, in favor of an all-inclusive structural model, often referred to as "ego psychology." It is indeed possible to describe the analysis of dreams, including secondary revision, in terms of the structural model without references to the topographic, but the effort tends to deprive the process of much of its complexity and richness of allusion, which are better conveyed by immediate references to levels of consciousness. Each model gives us concepts and terms we require in order to think about the mind, and especially about the dreaming or dreamy mind.

Just as physicists have required both wave and particle theory to ask different questions about the nature of light, we need both models to ask questions about the mental apparatus. These models will have to suffice until we can come up with a unitary theory of the mind, more elegant and explanatory than either of these. I hope we shall, for the questions raised by the ways that dreams are prepared for telling are the prototypes for many unanswered questions about mental life in general.

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